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Reds Kept Local Student 15 Hours Without Food for Taking Photos

Fifteen hours in Communist hands. That was the experience of Tim Stoen, Littleton graduate, who had the audacity to take a picture of a sign being erected in East Berlin.

Stoen told about his ordeal at the Rotary Club last week after returning from a year abroad on a Rotary Fellowship.

"I thought I should go to East Berlin and see what it is like behind the Iron Curtain," Stoen said. "The first thing that I noticed was

TIM STOEN

the blank expression on the faces of everyone. You could tell they were just waiting for the day they might have some freedom. This will come slowly. Poets are already getting some freedom, and so are theatrical people and musicians. It was noteworthy that a journalist was able to print in Moscow the interview with President Kennedy."

Began Taking Pictures

Stoen said he took a number of pictures in East Berlin without difficulty. Then he took one of a sign being erected near the newly-built wall.

Three German officers rushed over to Tim and an East Berlin student who was showing him around. They took the pair at 12:30 p.m. to a building and held them there until 8 p.m.

"I was fearful for my new-found friend because he had taken too many liberties for the Communists, and I didn't want to get him into trouble," Stoen said. "Finally, at 8 p.m., three men escorted me out of the building and put me in a Czech car. We drove and we drove in silence. I didn't know Berlin was so large. We came to a building with bars on it and I was taken in and questioned. They kept trying to trip me up, coming around to the same questions in different words to see if I would contradict myself. I had to take everything out of my pockets. They found a roll of exposed film and kept it. The guards were curious about my nail clip and wanted to see how it worked. They had never seen an American coin purse that opens a crack when you bend it, and they were like children with it. I was getting both weak and apprehensive, and I was trying to test the power of positive thinking. I had had no food for 15 hours and I was glad when they brought me some unpalatable ham sandwiches. Soon afterwards, they took me to the border and let me go."

Stoen had a happier experience in West Germany, 5 miles from the East German border. A little old lady recognized him as an American without much in the way of funds.

"She pressed two things in my hands," Stoen reported. "One gift was about 40c worth of coins and the other was a sack containing four bananas. She told me that she loved Americans for the kindness she received from them at the close of World War II."

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